

What a weekend! I think we're on to something with this Wiffle Ball tournament.

What started as a crazy idea at a Twinsburg Baseball board meeting a couple of years ago is quickly evolving into a city tradition. All weekend we heard stories of people creating their own Wiffle Ball fields in their backyard. All summer we saw kids pitching to homemade strike zone backstops and saw people around town with event t-shirts. And for the last year, we've been fielding emails from people all across America that found us online and have asked questions, inquired about starting their own tournaments, or asking us to run one for them. We had teams drive in from Pennsylvania, Michigan and Kentucky for the event. The vast majority of teams dressed in custom made uniforms. We had mayoral candidates in attendance. Kids bummed they had to leave Liberty to go to their football games. We sold 100 t-shirts. Had 200 people attend a party three days before the event started. And had close to 1,000 people up at Liberty Park, which was a sea of music, coolers, tents, chairs, kids and adults in uniforms, vendors ... and hundreds of Wiffle Ball games played on seven fields. There were several times this weekend when I looked at what was going on up at Liberty and was completely blown away with what I was seeing, and so happy we took this thing and ran with it.

Time flies, kids get older, things change. Ask anyone with older kids, and they will tell you they how much they miss weekends like this one. Kids being kids. Parents making new, and in many cases lifelong friends through youth sports. Getting a chance to get to know other people in the community. Hanging out at a park with a lounge chair, tent, and a cooler on a beautiful summer weekend. At least for me, these are the reasons I love being involved in weekends like this one, and I throw myself at them because I know how much I will miss them ten years from now.

A good friend of mine, someone who I respect immensely, he coached youth baseball at a pretty high level and then on into high school. His kids are now college age. He gave me advice as I started to get more involved in youth baseball that I always think about. He told me when it was all said and done, most coaches laugh at how serious they took and made things. That competitiveness and nerves are much different things than tension, and that tension has no place in youth baseball. Every tough decision, make it with what's best for the kids long term in mind and never waver from that. Keep things fun and judge seasons not by wins and losses but by whether or not the kids are happy or sad when its over. And that a huge part of the youth baseball experience is about creating memories.

We want this Wiffle Ball tournament to be a big part of that memory-creating youth baseball experience.

Every year, we ask for feedback. We get a lot we don't ask for. ;- ) And we take notes. We will continue to make subtle tweaks to the event to improve it. We don't want people up there looking for walks. That was definitely not the case Sunday afternoon, as the top teams in each age division had no problem "pinging the metal". But we will consider expanding the strike zones. Better defining the age limits, pitching boxes, and some gray areas of the rules. And working even closer with the umps pre-tourney to make sure they are fully prepped as well.

Before we get to the results, there are a lot of people to thank. Jason Passek was my right hand man with this tournament from start to finish and gave a whole hell of a lot of himself, which will surprise no one that knows Jason. Aaron and Annie Davis ... Aaron personally created the strike zones for the tournament, not a small task. And set up and tore down the huge hospitality tent we all took shade breaks under. His wife Annie's business, Gavin Scott Salon (named after her sons) not only sponsored, but set up camp and gave away Wiffle Balls to kids on Saturday. Rick Hollan got Sherwin Williams to donate field paint, and spent all day Friday helping us create the fields, bringing his son Max and son's friend Kaden. Paul Baird covered sponsors. Ken Erdmann and the 11U travel team parents manned the hospitality tent all weekend. Bill Burson was involved in many aspects of the event from start to finish. Andy Chenkus took a day off work to help create fields, as did Ron Schultz and Chris Hojdar. Bill Tisone managed the umps. Raj Taneja took care of the trophies. Geoff Goss took pictures. And as they always do any time they are called upon for anything TBL related, Tony Dye and Jim Porach helped out as well.

Big thanks to the great people at Burgers 2 Beer for hosting the pre-party, we'll be back there next year. To Gavin Scott Salon, El Chile Bravo, Tim's Collision, and Sherwin Williams for sponsoring. And to the Twinsburg Service

Department for letting us use their paint striper and for staffing Liberty for the weekend. And to our team of TBL umpers that served as field officials.

We also have a few t-shirts left. All red. Three youth small, two youth medium, and four adult large. \$15 each.

On to the results ... and much more detail (names, pics, etc.) is available on [the TBL Facebook page](#), which you should also take a second to "like" if you have not already. I have also attached copies of the final brackets and pool play results. Note: next year, we will be adding the "Tom Plucinsky Pain in the Nuts Award", which will go annually to the highest maintenance parent of a registered player.

Best Team Name - Pigs Might Fly (narrowly over Old and Fat)

Best Uniforms - The Wiffabees

Team That Came The Furthest - Did We Win? (Louisville, KY)

7-10 Home Run Derby - Justin Bremner

11+ Home Run Derby - Mike Csismatia

### **7-10 Age Division: The Ball Busters 6 Pak Attack 1**

The 7-10 age division championship game featured kids from the 2015 9U Twinsburg and Nordonia travel teams, which enjoyed a fierce but friendly rivalry on the baseball field this spring. While Nordonia got the better of Twinsburg on the baseball field, it was the Twinsburg kids that won the Wiffle Ball battle. Behind dominant pitching all tournament long from Nick Swerbinsky and Jack Phillips, and timely extra base hits and home runs from Nick, Jack, Stan Musbach, and Ben Christopher ... The Ball Busters went undefeated all weekend to become the 7-10 champions. They allowed 0, 1, 3, and 1 runs in their last four games. And won an epic 3-1 six inning game over the Rad Lions Choppin Chickens in the quarterfinals on a walk off home run by Nick, who had also pitched scoreless frames in the 4th, 5th, and 6th in that contest, which was likely the most exciting game of the tournament. For Stan Musbach of The Ball Busters, this was his second straight championship in the 7-10 age division, winning last year's event with The Weekend Warriors. Aiden Bulanda, Kyan Freyhauf, and Patrick Farrell of the Pak Attack had quite a tournament of their own, dominating their first four opponents by an aggregate score of 63-25 to go unbeaten en route to the title game.

### **11-14 Age Division: Golden Warhawks 11 Balls O'Wiff 1**

Zack Carinci, Zack Simchon, Tyler Horvath, and Will Keefe have been playing baseball together for a long time, including these past couple of months at Keefe Field, their own home made practice field designed to prep for this event. A 14-2 Saturday pool play loss had them relegated to a 8 AM win or go home game Sunday morning as the #16 seed in the 11-14 division. Four wins later, the Golden Warhawks forever etched their place in Twinsburg Baseball history with a Wiffle Ball championship over a LOADED field in the event's most competitive age division. The Warhawks were led by the pitching of "The Zacks", as Carinci and Simchon pinged the metal like pros, allowing 0, 4, 6, and 1 run in their four Sunday wins. And Tyler Horvath and Will Keefe led an athletic and unstoppable defense that backed up the pitching. Despite the loss in this year's championship, the defending champions Balls O' Wiff (Nick Bonnizzio, Bobby Hausler, Matt Christopher, and Garrett Olson) achieved an incredible accomplishment, going to the title game in back to back years, fighting through fields of 24 and 32 teams to do so.

### **15+ Age Division: Team Wrobel 7 Ping The Metal 0**

Rightfully so, much of the pre-tournament and Saturday pool play buzz of the 2nd Annual World Series of Wiffle Ball was centered around the Wrobel Brothers, who cruised through the adult division last year with style, making quick work of their foes behind the right AND left arm of ambidextrous of Bissell Elementary School 2nd grade teacher Phil Wrobel. And the buzz was definitely centered around the Wrobels when they lost a Saturday pool play game by a 4-3 count to Old And Fat, which bumped Team Wrobel to the #4 seed for championship play on Sunday. As it turns out, the Wrobel's tasting their own blood just makes them more dangerous, as they carved through the adult field like a hot knife through butter on Sunday, winning three straight to go back to back, and put themselves one more

championship in a row away from the official definition of a dynasty. Ping The Metal (Rick Hollan, Rich Swerbinsky, Jason Passek, Nate Velican) was led to the title game behind the left arm of Rick Hollan, who allowed just five total runs in their four wins that led them to the title game, including the tournaments only no-hitter (just minutes after finishing a three beer lunch at El Chile Bravo), quieting the critics skeptical of Ping The Metal GM Rich Swerbinsky's decision to sign the veteran lefty to a 3 year, 32 million dollar deal in the weeks leading into the tournament.

We got a lot of nice comments. People asking what they could do to contribute or help. Spread the word! Forward this email to people who may want to play next year. Volunteer to help next year. Go get your haircut at Gavin Scott Salon.

Thank you for participating! Send us your pics! Come back next year!

~ Rich Swerbinsky